

**LOS GATOS/MONTE SERENO
COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (CERT)
COURSE SUMMARY**

Introduction

Following a major disaster, first responders who provide police, fire and medical services will not be able to meet the demand for these services. Factors such as the number of victims, communications failures and road blockages will prevent people from accessing emergency services they have come to expect at a moment's notice through 911. People will have to rely on each other for help in order to meet their immediate life saving and sustaining needs.

Background

The CERT concept was developed and implemented by the L.A. City Fire Department (LAFD) in 1985. The Whittier Narrows earthquake in 1987 underscored the area-wide threat of a major disaster in California. Further, it confirmed the need for training civilians to meet their immediate needs. The training program developed by the LAFD furthers the process of citizens understanding their responsibility in preparing for a disaster. It also increases their ability to help themselves, their family and their neighbors.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and subsequently the Department of Homeland Security recognized the value of this program and directed the Emergency Management Institute and National Fire Academy to adopt and expand the CERT curricula to be applicable to all hazards. The resulting training course can be taken in most major cities throughout the country and is being offered throughout California, including Los Gatos and Monte Sereno.

Course Summary

The CERT training for local residents is delivered in five 3-hour sessions, followed by a hands-on exercise and final examination, which is administered on a Saturday. The 18-hour course consists of the following:

- Session 1, Disaster Preparedness – addresses hazards to which people are vulnerable in our community. Material covers actions the participants and their families take before, during and after a disaster. Since the CERT trainees will help their family members and neighbors, the training can help them operate in a safe and appropriate manner. The CERT concept and organization are discussed as well as the applicable laws governing volunteers in our jurisdictions.
- Session 2, Fire Safety – briefly covers fire chemistry, hazardous materials and fire suppression strategies. However, the thrust of the session is safe and effective use of fire extinguishers, sizing up the situation, controlling utilities and extinguishing a small fire.
- Session 3, Disaster Medical Operations - participants practice diagnosing and treating airway obstruction, bleeding and shock by using simple triage and rapid treatment techniques. Additionally, the session covers evaluating patients by doing head-to-toe assessment, establishing a medical treatment area, performing basic first aid and practicing in a safe and sanitary manner.
- Session 4, Light Search and Rescue – participants learn about search and rescue planning, size-up, search techniques and most important, rescue safety.
- Session 5, Disaster Psychology, Terrorism and Team Organization – the session cover the signs and symptoms that might be experienced by the disaster victim and worker. The terrorism unit defines the terms of biological, nuclear, incendiary, chemical and explosive (B-NICE), their weapons, the indicators regarding their use, as well as actions to be taken following a suspected terrorism event. The final unit addresses CERT organization and management principles and the need for proper documentation.
- Session 6, Course Review and Disaster Simulation – participants review their answers from their take-home examination. Finally, they practice the skills that they have learned during the previous sessions.

The Instructors

All have completed and are certified through the Emergency Management Institute train-the-trainer program. Included in this cadre are members of the Santa Clara County Fire Department, the Los Gatos/Monte Sereno Police Department, its SWAT team, certified Emergency Medical Technicians and Disaster Aid and Rescue Team (DART) members.